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ABSTRACT

The "Open Door" Program began in Spring 1968 at PS 123 and in Fall 1968 at PS 84, and has been expanded in these schools in the 1969-70 school year. It seeks, within the large urban school, to set up a flexible and intimate learning environment, to provide greater continuity between grade levels, and to enrich the curriculum so that children have a chance to relate to more things and people. The teacher's role is seen as supporting and extending these experiences. A "corridor" can be effectively considered a unit apart from the school and so a "small school" within a big school. Classrooms, from pre-school through second, opening from such a corridor are the program's unit. By opening the doors, enriching equipment in classroom and corridor, and encouraging movement through the corridor between the classrooms and movement into the corridor, a continuity program, one grade from another even from pre-school, could be established--thus meshing with the actual progress of the child. The program proposes to continue the enriched environment and individualized teacher-child relationship of Head Start, and to show that Head Start gains can be maintained. The program also seeks to create a model for student teachers of individual and small group teaching in the midst of multiple activities. (Author/JM)

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PRS 003

A Report by the Program Reference Service

"Open Door"

New York City

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and Dorothea Grine

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Under the direction of its Dissemination Division, the Center publishes a wide variety of reports, monographs, books, and bibliographies. A complete list of those items in print is available on request.

The Program Reference Service identified, examined, and provided information on programs in grades K-6 which deal with the problems of urban school systems. Its reports have been designed to meet the stated needs of school administrators and other educational decision-makers, and are offered as informational aids to effective educational planning. The development of the Program Reference Service was made possible by a grant to the Center from the Division of Information Technology and Dissemination, Bureau of Research, U.S. Office of Education. This report was prepared under the direction of Joseph Pincus.

Foreword

'The free day', 'the integrated day', 'the Infant School' – these terms have become synonymous with efforts in school systems throughout the country to develop enriched, informally-structured curricula for the primary grades. One of the most impressive programs in this fast growing movement is Lillian Weber's OPEN DOOR in a number of New York City public schools.

Professor Weber is an authority on the English approach to early childhood education, and her own program is built on some of the same theories. Yet OPEN DOOR is not an attempt to replicate an English design. Its importance stems from its focus on specific needs and problems in urban public schools in this country. Its potential for success lies in its ability to undercut the tensions in such schools – tensions that are only touched upon in the body of this report – and to engage fully teachers and administrators in the process of deepening the in-school learning experiences of young children.

Mrs. Weber is a master of strategy. Her use of the corridor outside the classroom as a highly visible "nonintrusive model" is simple but ingenious. Her approach to grade mixing is a new and positive use of vertical organization in the elementary school. Her respect for individual teaching styles and her attempt to involve all teachers in the making of program decisions have resulted in a staff commitment independent of her presence at any given school in the program.

OPEN DOOR is still relatively new. Our report describes only the early experiences of the first two schools in the program. In 1969-70 four more schools instituted the program, and in 1970-71 six additional schools will try it. We must hope that this growing interest will stimulate the schools to explore the full dimensions of the program as well as its impact on the children particularly. But we can say now, without doubt, OPEN DOOR is bringing new life to the schools that have adopted it.

JP 6/70

Acknowledgments

The Program Reference Service would like to thank the teachers and administration in PS 123 and PS 84. Both schools extended great courtesy to our several analysts and evaluators. We would like to thank Mr. Jack Isaacs of District 5 for his openness in discussing the problems of his Balanced Class Project. We are grateful to Dr. Millie Almy and Dr. Sol Gordon who, on very short notice, agreed to evaluate the program in PS 123. We are especially indebted to Professor Lillian Weber who, despite an incredibly busy schedule, gave freely of her time. Without her generous assistance we would have been unable to complete this report. Finally, our thanks to Barbara Fogel of the Center's editorial staff for her complete reworking of the manuscript. The photographs in this book were taken at PS 123 and PS 84 by Howard Sisowitz.

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I. THE PROGRAM: TWO DESCRIPTIONS

PS 123

Located in Harlem, PS 123 is typical of large New York City elementary schools built in the 1950s. Its staff of 60 or so teachers mans 47 classrooms absorbing a student population of 1300, in this case 95 percent Negro and 5 percent Spanish-speaking. For the most part, the students are homogeneously grouped on grade and receive traditionally structured lessons in their 'self-contained' classrooms. In one corner of the school, however, things are different. Here, five classes – a prekindergarten, two kingergartens, a first and a second grade – have been grouped on an L-shaped corridor to form what Professor Lillian Weber, the designer of the program, calls "a school within a school," and what has come to be known formally as the Open Door program. For an hour and a half, three mornings and two afternoons a week, a visitor to this part of the school will find the doors of the five classrooms open, children moving from one room to another, and a great deal of activity in the corridor outside. One visitor has described the corridor activities as follows:

A Corridor session

> At 9:00 A.M. teacher aides and student teachers begin to line the small, L-shaped section of the corridor with tables and chairs. Out of the storage room they bring boxes full of ma-

terials and spread the contents on the tables. There are scales, Cuisenaire rods, water vessels, musical instruments, a dozen different kinds of math puzzles, counting devices, hexagons, trapezoids, animals, clay, all manner of measuring devices. Singly, and in pairs, threes, and fours, children filter into the corridor from five classrooms, the doors of which are open and inside of which teachers are conducting lessons. Outside, the corridor has become another kind of place. Some children move directly to activities, having learned the corridor's offerings. Others, sometimes with a friend in tow, shop around before settling down to one thing. And others, perhaps first or second graders, after staying awhile, move through the corridor into one of the classrooms, perhaps a kindergarten or prekindergarten, to listen to a story or play a piano, or to play with animals or use the workbench. At one table a four-year-old has spread herself on a piece of newsprint on the floor while a student teacher traces her form in crayon, which she will then measure in blocks and hang on the wall. Other children are pacing off distances, measuring with string. At another table a five year old boy, who until the previous week had been disruptive, doing nothing in the corridor but running back and forth, has just put together, with an effort of intense concentration, a puzzle consisting of triangular and rectangular shapes. Encouraged to show his teacher what he's done ("Show her, Paul, she doesn't know you can to this"), he brings her into the corridor.

Lillian Weber, who set up the corridor, comes by and suggests that the boy record his feat. A second grader is called over to write what he describes. Another second grader who had just entered the corridor stops Mrs. Weber and announces she is about to write a story about the educator. Mrs. Weber stands absolutely still as the girl counts the 114 stripes on her dress. In a minute, both stories are completed, passed around, read and re-read, and posted on a bulletin board already 12 deep in stories and records of activity. A few feet away a group of four has been working steadily for an hour weighing shoes and discussing relationships with the corridor teacher, a young graduate student hired for the job. Mrs. Weber stops two kindergarten boys puffing hard from running. They are full of themselves and of being on their own. A visitor holds one boy, tells him how fast his heart is beating, and gets him to listen to his friend's heart beat. Now the movement in the corridor is fluid. There is a lot of doing and a lot of telling. Questions are investigated in many ways. Nothing that is said or done is left unexamined. Children return to their classes, others come out, work continues in all the rooms. A child pauses at the entrance of one room before going in to show her teacher a paper flower she has just made. Inside the room, run along formal lines, there is a striking absence of restlessness. Children are hard at work despite the sounds and movement from the corridor. In sharp contrast, a second grade class next door operates informally in small clusters of children. A teacher comes to the doorway of her room, watches the activity

in the corridor for a time and returns to her work. By 11:00 A.M. the corridor begins to clear. Materials, tables, and chairs have been returned to their storeroom. Left on the corridor walls are the paper cutouts of children's figures. It is only then, when the corridor is empty, that a visitor notices how dark it is inside the school. (R1, P.19)

PS 84

The atmosphere of Open Door at another school, PS 84, on West 92nd Street, in Manhattan, is similar, but the arrangements differ. PS 84 has a school population of about 900 students. Both school and neighborhood are ethnically mixed. Of the student body in 1968, 38 percent were white, 29 percent Puerto Rican, 25 percent Negro, the rest, other Spanish-speaking or Oriental.

Here in PS 84 the use of the corridor is more limited than at PS 123; and the program relies more on internal changes in four contiguous kindergarten and first grade classes. In these classes, PS 84 has drastically revised and reformed the teacher-pupil relationship: the teacher no longer expects to receive continuous attention; she no longer considers the entire class a homogeneous unit. This is how the same observer described a first grade class in PS 84:

An Open Door classroom

Children worked in about four separate small groups, while others worked by themselves. There was a math lesson going on directed by the teacher. A visiting parent was reading to three girls. An aide sat among a gathering of five children showing them how to knit. A fifth grader who had dropped by for a visit was showing two of the first graders how to clean a rabbit cage. Children were building boats, shaping clay, painting. A reader came up to the teacher to ask a question, listened for a minute at the math table and decided to stay and participate. When the teacher excused herself to talk to a visitor, one of the children took over the task of leading the group in a game involving mathematical relationships, A high level of enthusiasm continued throughout the day. Children, on their own, left their groups and helped themselves to various pre-reading games set up in large envelopes along the blackboard ledge. These included games that required putting together parts of sentences or words to make complete sentences or words, as well as lotto games. Other children worked from similar set-ups on opposite walls for number and measurement activities, science, and preceptual discrimination practice. Most of the material had been designed and constructed by the teacher. None of the children or the adults working in the room seemed in the least bit put out by the level of noise. Voices adjusted to the immediate group. The teacher was in continual movement, stopping sometimes five minutes, sometimes fifteen minutes, to work with a group or a child. In the course of a week, she explained, she would check on the progress of all the children at least once to insure the ground she wanted covered was indeed being covered. (R1,p.22)

II. RATIONALE

Objectives

Open Door began in spring 1968 at PS 123, in fall 1968 at PS 84, and has been expanded in these schools in the 1969-70 school year. It seeks, within the large urban school, to set up a flexible and intimate learning environment, to provide greater continuity between grade levels, and to enrich the curriculum so that children have a chance to relate to more things and people. The teacher's role is seen as supporting and extending these experiences. According to Mrs. Lillian Weber, Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education at City College of New York and the consultant and driving force behind Open Door, the program is an effort to explore the possibilities for change in the environment of learning. It has a background in theory and practice.

A. In Practice

The Head Start experience

The need for change in the learning environment became especially evident when children who had participated in Head Start programs entered public school classes. During the early days of the Head Start program, it was found that most gains achieved during the eight-week pro-

gram of sensory and language enrichment disappeared when the Head Start child entered first grade. In Head Start he was exposed to enrichment materials and individualized instruction; interaction with other children and adults encouraged him to discover things by himself. The typical urban elementary school had no enrichment materials, insufficient individualized teaching, and inadequate interaction. Mrs. Weber explained the problem in the following terms:

> The usual classroom has prescribed standards of accomplishment, a preplanned curriculum, almost total emphasis on verbal learning, limited environment, very little interrelating of one area of learning with another, very little small group instruction, and a widespread use of homogeneous grouping. The teacher's presentation rarely recognizes differing levels of development, accomplishment, motivation, pace or mode of learning. Failure for some is built into such a setting.

All this, Mrs. Weber believed, would have to be overcome. The self-contained classroom isolated teacher from teacher and perpetuated the whole-class mode of instruction in which the teacher had been trained. Such isolation and the size of the school, Mrs. Weber thought, were serious obstacles to change.

"Follow Through"

In the spring of 1967, the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity proposed limited funding of "Follow Through" programs that would seek to retain Head Start gains in the elementary school. A number of educators, Mrs. Weber among them, believed that a successful Follow Through would entail structuring the normal school and classroom in a manner similar to Head Start. Such restructuring called for a major overhaul of current teaching methods and administrative practices, as well as of classroom structure and behavior.

B. In Theory

The work of Jean Piaget

The need for reform in classroom structure had long been implied in the work of Jean Piaget, the noted child psychologist. His description of how children acquire an understanding of number and space and how they develop cognitive processes has been considered important for a number of years in Europe and England and, more recently, in this country. In essence, Piaget found that children learn over varying periods of time, in repeated encounters with concrete experiences and in exchanges of differing points of view.

The traditional classroom structure in the early grades is not supportive of the ways in which

children learn, according to Piaget's observations. Such traditional structure is based on the assumption that children learn passively from what the teacher 'tells' them and from absorbing her 'messages'. Acting upon Piaget's analysis would require a vastly enriched classroom environment, allowing the child to explore with concrete materials and to interact with other children as well as with the teacher.

The English Infant School

Long before Piaget was the influence that he is today, educators in England had developed an approach to which they later added Piagetian insights on cognitive development. They observed that children were curious, learned most readily from things around them which interested them, learned in different ways and at their own pace. They observed that for any individual child the pattern of his performance and learning was often uneven. Children learned best, they found, when sparked by their own interests or by a question they themselves had asked of the experience.

In response to these observations, English educators first included objects and materials in the classroom and allowed children to use them; later such practices overflowed to the whole school, corridors and stairways as well as classrooms. The school provided for the unevenness of pace and differing ways of learning by mixing age groups within the school around certain activities; in some schools each class within the school was also a mixed age group.

Infant Schools are first stage, for ages five to seven, of English compulsory education. Over a 50-year period most of these schools have loosened curriculum requirements and standards and have eased schedules and timetables to allow a freer response to differing patterns of learning, adjusting school life to the observed pattern of child learning. Such adjustments, to enrich experiences and allow for individualized teacher-child relationships, have become known as the "free day" (sometimes also called the undifferentiated or integrated day). The amount of schedule and subject matter adjustment differs, but all these adjustments are changes from the traditional whole-class pattern. Learning occurs wherever it will; in the corridors, on stairways, in the playgrounds, over a workbench, a water table, in the animal or plant corner; almost invariably learning takes place in small groups. Seldom are the classes instructed as a homogeneous unit. Mixed age groupings are common; older children participate in the teaching of younger children, and learn from such activities; and the teacher relates to the children as individuals, as members of small learning clusters. The child thus learns continually at his own rate of speed; teachers in one grade are not isolated from teachers and children in other grades; they can and do observe and sometimes supervise and participate in learning activities of children in higher and lower grades.

In 1965 and 1966 Mrs. Weber spent 18 months in England studying the Infant School, under the sponsorship of London University. She visited 56 schools in working-class areas of London, Birmingham, and Bristol, and talked to scores of government officials, headmistresses, teachers, and parents. She made a film on the Infant School and wrote a book and articles on the subject.*

* The book: *The English Infant School; a Model for Informal Education.* New Jersey, Prentice-Hall for the Center for Urban Education, in preparation.

The film: *Infants School.* Newton, Massachusetts, Educational Development Center, 1966.

See also: "The Infant School." In: *The encyclopedia of education.* New York, Macmillan, in press.

III. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Some basic problems: size of the school, the self-contained classroom, teacher training

When Mrs. Weber returned to the United States, her film helped to develop the growing interest here in English Infant Schools. She hoped that knowledge of the practical achievements in England would result, not in an imitation of English Infant Schools, but in a discussion of possibilities in this country. She believed that for all its merits, the Infant School could not be easily 'translated' into the American environment, that such an attempt would meet serious stumbling blocks, and that changes in the organization of our schools would have to be experimental, just as they had been in England. Educators seeking to translate Infant School experience, she felt, would first have to find practical ways of counteracting the size of the school and the isolation imposed by the self-contained classroom. Within the traditional city school she wanted to provide a place for children to work on their own, with each other, and with new materials. She also wanted a process of retraining teachers by example that would neither threaten nor force itself on teachers. And she wanted a place where student teachers could apply the child development and learning theory they had received in college and graduate school; most practice situations in which the system's future teachers were placed, she felt,

made impossible the very learning and imaginative approach to teaching they should be acquiring.

The idea of the corridor

To meet these needs, Mrs. Weber began to develop a plan for an overflow area where children from several adjacent classrooms on different grade levels could engage in activities designed to enrich their experience and provide self-directed learning, and where teachers could observe a model of small group learning. The overflow area that Mrs. Weber chose was, logically enough, the corridor outside the classrooms, in sight of each teacher and each classroom.

A. PS 123

PS 123 agrees to try the program

Mrs. Weber had a chance to put her ideas into practice in the spring of 1967. The teacher education department of City College of New York was affiliated with five Harlem schools. One of these "campus" schools was PS 123 in District 6, an urban school typical in its problems of size, of children who were not learning, and of teachers who had little contact with other teachers. Teachers in PS 123 were not noticeably dissatisfied with their methods, nor particularly interested in innovation and the experimental development of new techniques. But Mrs. Weber, assigned from CCNY as consultant, suggested that she explore possibilities for the creation of a new learning environment at PS 123. The college agreed with her suggestion, and so did the PS 123 administration. The school agreed to participate in an experimental program out of a modest hope that the program could not do any harm and that it might somewhat improve education in PS 123. The school sought some continuity in the early grades. It hoped that teachers, distrustful of one another because of children who didn't learn, could develop more respect for the work of the teachers in lower grade levels, who in turn, through a continuous, interrelated program, would understand the demands of the next grade.

1. *The Corridor*

First request for fun

CCNY applied to OEO for Follow Through funds for the program to start in September 1967. Mrs. Weber's proposal described the program as follows:

Rationale

> A corridor can be effectively considered a unit apart from the school and so a "small school" within a big school. Classrooms, from pre-school through second, opening from such a corridor are my unit. By opening the doors, enriching equipment in classroom and corridor, encouraging movement through the corridor between classrooms and movement into corridor, a continuity program, one grade from another, even from pre-school, could be established, meshing with the actual progress of the child.

The program proposed to continue the enriched environment and individualized teacher-child

Program aims

relationship of Head Start, and to show that Head Start gains can be maintained. Without basically changing present classrooms, class size, and grading, it proposed adding only enriching equipment, and an open door arrangement. Such an arrangement was designed to help the child learn on his own and help the teacher plan more easily and establish better communications with children and their teachers. The program also sought to create a model for student teachers of individual and small group teaching in the midst of multiple activities, and to train a corps of teachers who could do this kind of teaching. OEO, interested at that point (1967) only in grade-by-grade rather than in "unitary" programs, rejected the application. CCNY, Mrs. Weber, the school, and the district elected to begin Open Door in PS 123 without funds. Later, the program received two grants from private sources, totaling $3,000, for the purchase of materials for the corridor.

Selection of teachers

In the winter of 1967-68, Mrs. Weber met several times with prekindergarten, kindergarten, first and second grade teachers in PS 123. She talked about the structure of the corridor rather than about theory. She described the kind of model that could be made available, without attacking teaching styles. Mrs. Weber chose five teachers from the dozen or so who expressed willingness and mild interest, and together they began to plan the hundred and one details.

Fire Regulations

A large practical hurdle was the corridor. A wide corridor with a minimum of school traffic was chosen, but use of the site immediately ran up against New York City fire regulations. These regulations prohibit conducting classes in the corridor. While the corridor session was clearly not a class, it fell within a gray area of the law. Fortunately the corridor in question was extra-wide. Fire inspectors and custodians agreed that the corridor could be used if materials, tables, and chairs were arranged on only one wall of the corridor, leaving a free aisle; if they were moved back into the classrooms at the end of each session; and if the corridor were free of obstructions at all other times.

Corridor sessions begin

Open Door began in March 1968 with three corridor sessions a week in which the five classes were involved – a prekindergarten, two kindergartens, a first and second grade. Children were selected at random to reflect a range of achievement levels and bring a measure of heterogeneity to the classes. Mrs. Weber and the school arranged a workshop for parents to acquaint them with the program's aims and instructional methods.

Second request for funds

In the summer of 1968, PS 123, through the New York City Board of Education, made another request for funding, this time to the New York State Education Department, Office of Urban Education. The proposal, which asked for slightly over $40,000 for the 1968-69 school year, was endorsed by the district office, in part because of requests from the parents of PS 123.

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Teachers' strikes, custodial problems

The 1968-69 school year began with funding decisions still pending, and with three teachers' strikes. Although PS 123 remained open during the strikes, it was not until late November that corridor sessions began again. After the last strike, a newly appointed custodian noticed two or three tables left in the corridor between Open Door sessions and he demanded, in the name of the Fire Department regulations, that all tables and materials be permanently cleared.

The threat to the program was extremely grave. If use of the corridor were denied, it was very unlikely that here at PS 123 an alternative course of action could be developed. In their classrooms the program's teachers were, for the most part, conducting traditionally structured lessons. The corridor provided teachers with a model for using enrichment materials and for stimulating self-directed learning. Without the corridor, the teachers could not have witnessed the potential of unstructured, multi-level teaching.

Mrs. Weber rallied the teachers and parents who supported the program for a last stand. They pointed out to the custodian that the program had the district's approval, and he finally allowed reopening the corridor with the understanding that all materials, tables, and chairs would be in the corridor only during Open Door sessions. Extreme care was taken to place no extra burden on custodial work. The corridor was swept at the end of each session. Both the district and school custodians eventually accepted this arrangement.

Staff development

In the first months of operation, the program included five regular classroom teachers and five paraprofessional educational assistants. Mrs. Weber spent three or more mornings a week at PS 123, and five part-time student teachers took turns assisting her at various corridor stations. After a time, student teachers, with one in charge, took over entirely on one day.

Funds granted, program firmly established

In December 1968, the school assigned a recently hired substitute teacher to work with the corridor when possible. The project could now expand from three to five one-and-[illegible]lf hour sessions a week — one each day. Late in February 1969 New York State provi[illegible]00. Although less than half the sum asked for, the grant paid for more materials, an[illegible]n, and the salaries of two paraprofessionals to assist the corridor teacher. The program[illegible]d five classroom teachers and their five aides, one corridor teacher (when not needed i[illegible]itute coverage), two corridor assistants, five part-time student teachers, and the consultant (Mrs. Weber). What had begun as an underfunded, undermanned, and precarious experiment in an unpromising school context was now an ongoing program of considerable promise.

2. *The Curriculum*

Curriculum: the Weber approach

The essential problem of implementing the program in PS 123 was how to get radically new methods of instruction accepted and ultimately adopted by teachers who were not dissatisfied with their current methods. Mrs. Weber's basic approach was to work within the existing system as much as possible, to make no more changes than necessary, and not to impose goals and objectives from the outside. She set out to gain the teachers' trust – persuading them that she did not represent outside interests, was not an agent of the Board of Education, or an evaluator or critic of their performance. She was merely there to help. To questions as to whether Open Door might not adversely affect achievement levels, Mrs. Weber replied that Open Door was not designed to take the place of the school's reading program and posed no threat to the school's grade-oriented approach; it would merely supplement the curriculum by providing additional resources for all five classes. She persuaded the teachers that through the program they could get materials which they wanted but had not been able to obtain. Although she did not say so at the time, she hoped that if the corridor was a success, and if teachers became involved in developing the corridor model, they might begin to make major changes in their teaching styles and in the organization of their classrooms.

Introduction of new methods and materials

For several months before corridor sessions began, Mrs. Weber spent a great deal of time at the school. Drawing on her observations of the classrooms and her discussions with teachers, she began to compile a list of specific materials and equipment for the program. To show teachers the kinds of experiences she hoped children would have under the program, she began, with the teachers' permission, to introduce items of interest into the classroom. Sometimes these were brought from home, sometimes from other rooms. When, for example, the kindergarten's gerbils gave birth, she made sure that the first grade saw the young.

Teachers involved in planning

In order to involve the teachers from the beginning, Mrs. Weber asked them four questions. The first question was: Given a complete freedom of choice, what materials did the teachers wish for their classes? Put another way, what did the teachers like to do themselves that they would like to share with the children? One teacher liked to cook; an oven was purchased and installed in her room. Another teacher liked to sew; a third liked carpentry; appropriate equipment was purchased in each case. The second question was: When would the teachers find the class time to use the requested materials? This was one way of stating a more fundamental question: What place could a wide assortment of enrichment materials have in the tightly structured classroom, where the teacher is predominantly concerned with 'telling' the students what they 'should know', where routines are time-consuming, and where self-directed learning

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is minimal? The teachers concluded that they might set aside special class time for the use of new materials. They consolidated routine procedures to find new bits of usable time. Then a third question was posed: Were there not some of these materials that teachers would be willing to share with others in different grades? There were indeed. The fourth question was: Might not teachers mutually arrange for a common, concurrent period in which all five classes would share some of these materials? The teachers agreed this would be possible: scheduling problems were ironed out; and the teachers began to think of the corridor as the logical place for most of such sharing to take place. The five classes had been placed next to one another along a corridor where there were rooms on only one side. It was agreed that between 20 and 25 students would be permitted to use the corridor at any one time. During the corridor period each class would receive a limited number of students from other classes to participate in special activities.

Relationship of corridor sessions to regular classes

It was agreed in the planning stages that a teacher would be free to close her door during the corridor period if she wanted to. Her only obligation, if she took this step, was to try to become engaged in the program another time. Although there were occasions when a teacher did close her door during a corridor session, none did so permanently. The more enthusiastic teachers arranged to have their doors open and to allow children to visit from class to class during normal class times; some allowed children from other classes to knock on their doors and ask for permission to recount an unusual achievement or participate in one of the special learning activities, e.g., weighing and measuring the gerbils, cooking, and using the workbench.

In its first phase Open Door ran three days a week without a corridor teacher. Mrs. Weber initiated weekly meetings during lunch period with the teachers to discuss corridor and related classroom activities; this practice has continued throughout the program. A common prep period was also used for discussion.

Teacher reactions

After four months, the teachers began to react positively to the program; they began to understand the new demands that it placed on them for flexibility, alertness, responsiveness. One of them reported:

> I'm not too keen on trying to set up an exact routine which I follow. I have found that the most exciting experiences have been those which are truly spontaneous, and which arise from what is happening right then . . . you know in the early morning or early afternoon, before the corridor hour has started, what is going to happen; and that is certainly time enough for teachers who are truly flexible to free themselves to share a special experience with a child or a group of children. (R6,p.8)

Another stated:

> There has been a lot of discussion about control or the lack of it in our school – control over behavior – and we found in the corridor that behavior was never a problem. And I think the key to this is that we were flexible. A child was not forced into something that he did not want to do. Whatever he went to, he went to because it interested him. And if he left it, he was always able to find something else that he was interested in. The motivation came from within and needed little external control. (R6,p.21)

Another said:

> It struck me that one of the things you actually gained was some insight into the ways children's minds actually worked. (R6,p.20)

And another said:

> I found I was much freer, and children who did not speak in the classroom were freer to express themselves in the corridor. (R6,p.20)

And yet another said:

> I was not told what to do. I was able to see what the children needed, as opposed to looking in a book and saying, 'well, this is what has to be done'. (R6,p.20)

Scheduling of activities

During this initial period, Mrs. Weber and the teachers worked out the main problems associated with moving the children in and out of the corridor, as well as with organizing corridor activities. They set up a rotation schedule for corridor visiting; they agreed that each classroom could receive five 'visitors' at a time and prepared activities for these visitors. Each child was directed to specific activities in the corridor until he had become familiar with its offerings; thereafter he was free to work with whatever materials he chose. Parents and visitors to the school were easily absorbed into corridor activities for short periods and, indeed, helped to individualize the program. As the program became more familiar to them, second-grade children became involved in setting up and dismantling the corridor at each period.

Effect of the program on teachers and children

In spite of their growing involvement in the program and positive reactions to the corridor, during the 1968-69 school year the teachers made few substantial changes in the structure of their classrooms and their teaching behaviors. The corridor remained for them a supplement to their usual patterns of instruction. The children adjusted quickly to the differences; they

moved between the corridor and their classrooms with ease. By the end of the school year, first and second graders, particularly, showed a strong identification with the corridor. Continuous communication had become the ruling style. Children automatically assumed that they were to write a story or draw a picture about what they had done, or tell it to a teacher or an aide, or to their class. Comparison and equivalence, similarity and difference, measuring and comparing were integral parts of their discourse.

The corridor teacher and her two aides, who were hired when the program was funded in late February, worked in the classrooms when the corridor was not in session and helped to bring some of the corridor style into classrooms. But only after a spring visit to the program in PS 84 did teachers begin to think seriously about loosening the structure of their own classrooms. One second-grade teacher was so impressed that she moved immediately to make changes in her room. Others began to plan changes they would make in the coming term.

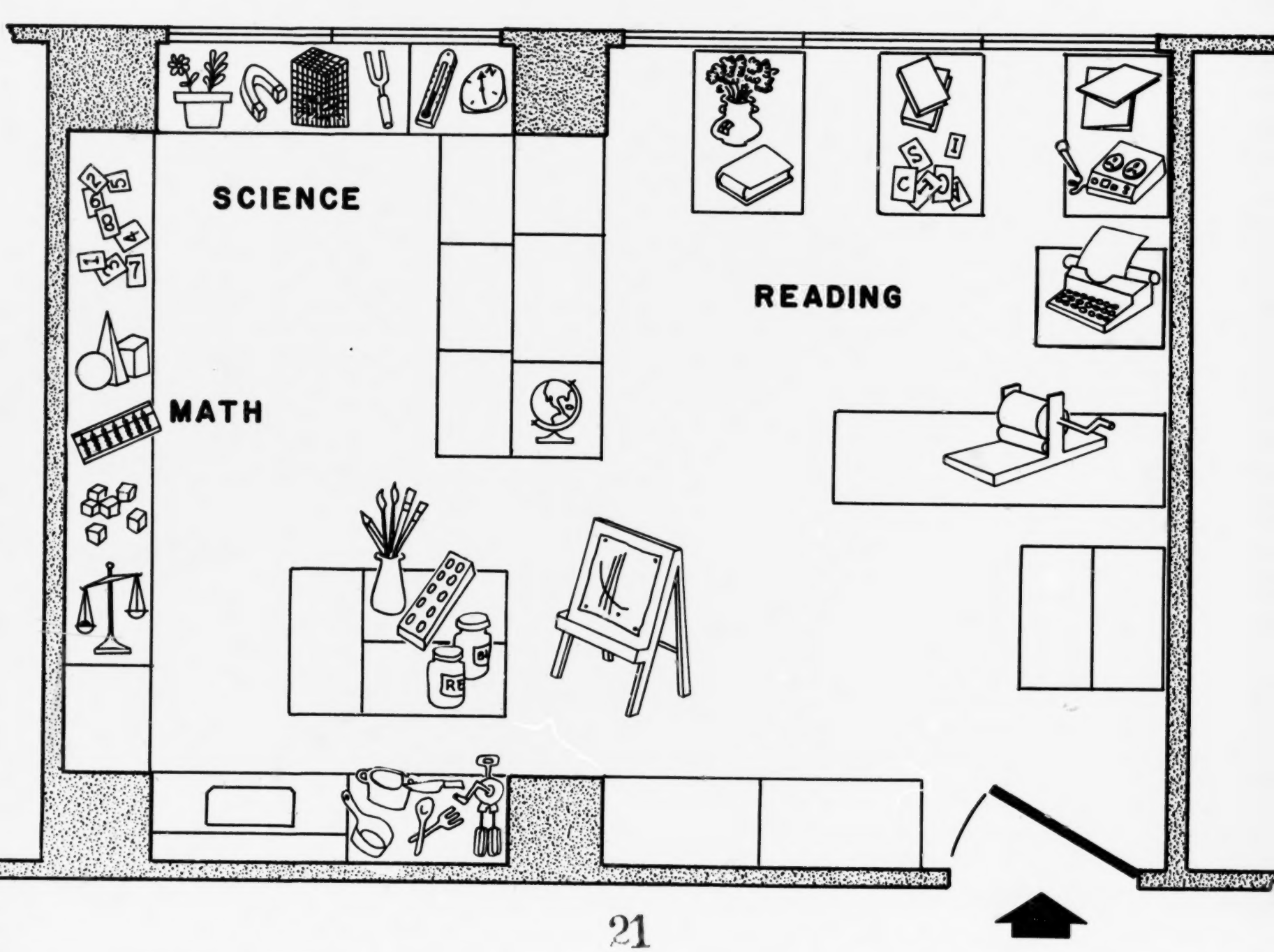
By the end of the term, teachers in the program wished it to resume the following year, wished more training and wished more classroom involvement. Other teachers in the school had become interested in participating. A continuation proposal was submitted to the New York State Education Department, recommending expansion of the program to a second corridor in the school, to be developed gradually as the first corridor had been.

B. PS 84

1. *How It Began*

PS 84: The Balanced Class Project

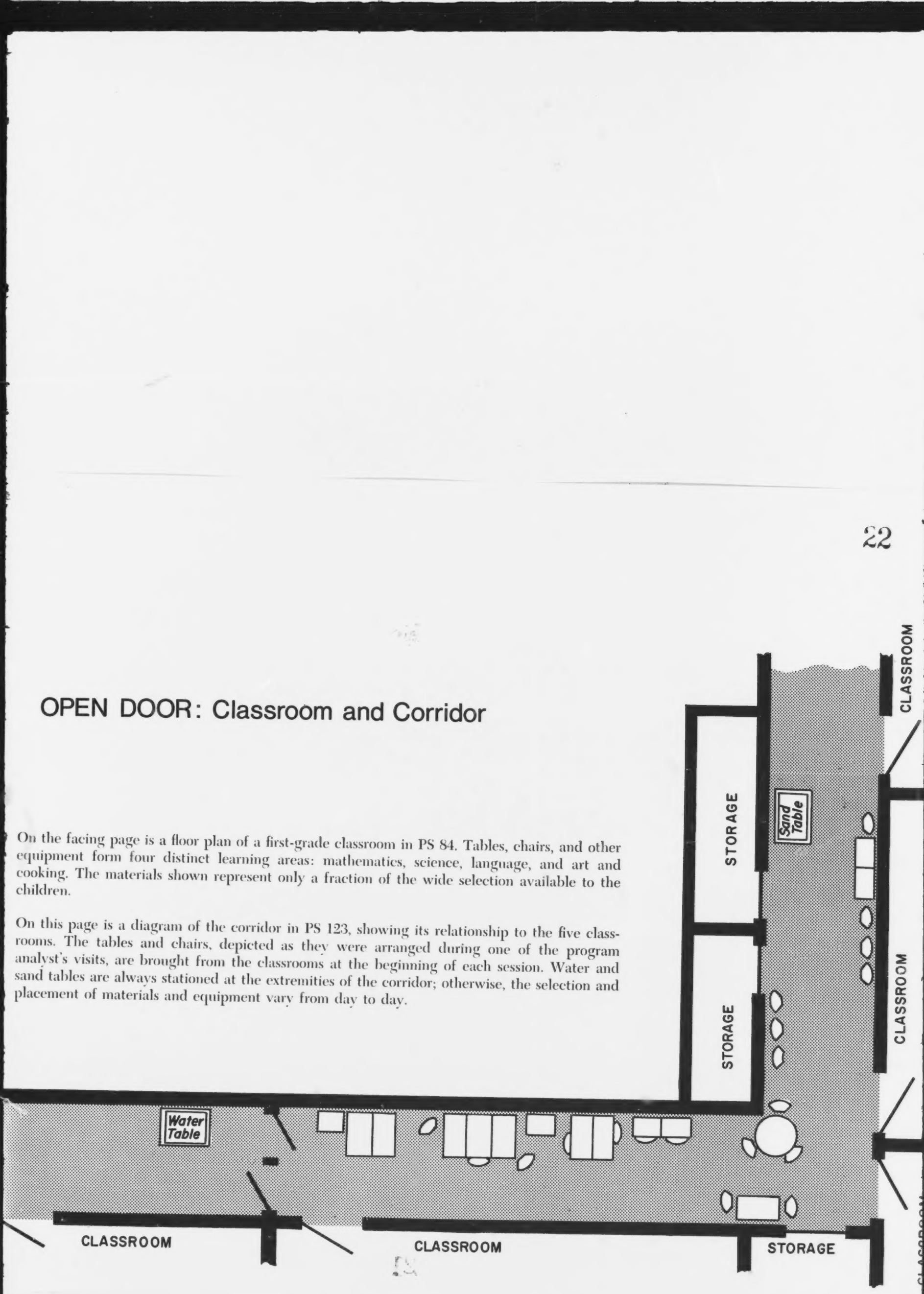
In the spring of 1968, a group of parents and teachers from PS 84 in District 5, an ethnically mixed school and neighborhood, came up to Harlem to observe Open Door at PS 123. PS 84 had a special motive for seeking new ideas and new ways of implementing multilevel classroom learning. Together with seven other schools in the district, PS 84 was part of the Balanced Class Project – an effort to foster racial integration in the classroom, funded by the New York State Department of Education. The Balanced Class Project is addressed to a common condition in schools with racially mixed student populations: the defacto segregation of classrooms caused by so-called ability grouping. Under the Balanced Class Project, PS 84, in seeking a racial mixture in the classroom equivalent to the racial mixture of the school, had begun to eliminate such tracking systems.


SCIENCE
READING
MATH

OPEN DOOR: Classroom and Corridor

On the facing page is a floor plan of a first-grade classroom in PS 84. Tables, chairs, and other equipment form four distinct learning areas: mathematics, science, language, and art and cooking. The materials shown represent only a fraction of the wide selection available to the children.

On this page is a diagram of the corridor in PS 123, showing its relationship to the five classrooms. The tables and chairs, depicted as they were arranged during one of the program analyst's visits, are brought from the classrooms at the beginning of each session. Water and sand tables are always stationed at the extremities of the corridor; otherwise, the selection and placement of materials and equipment vary from day to day.



The Balanced Class Project thus brought together in one classroom students with a large range of academic achievement and learning styles. Teachers in BCP schools found it extremely difficult to respond effectively to this heterogeneity. Many of them suspected that all children were being insufficiently educated under this arrangment. In some classes, for instance, there were some children ready for reading, others actually reading, others well behind and in need of speech and language stimulation.

The parents and teachers from PS 84 thought the answer to their problem might lie in multi-level teaching, in an emphasis on self-directed learning, in education geared to each child's own stage of development. They were impressed with the possibilities of Open Door they saw at PS 123 and prevailed upon their district office to invite Mrs. Weber to help implement the program in their school. The Balanced Class Project provided the financial support.

The conditions that led to the start of Open Door in PS 84 were thus very different from those at PS 123. PS 123 was firmly welded to standard classroom structure and standard curriculum, not because these had proved effective but because most parents, teachers, and administrators did not think in terms of experimentation and feared that change might only make matters worse. PS 84, however, had, and still has, a large body of teachers and parents strongly committed to changes in educational methodology. Their initiative planted the seed for the project in PS 84, and their enthusiasm sustained it.

Preliminary planning

During planning and early discussions with Mrs. Weber, the parents, teachers, and the district administration stated firmly what they wanted – the English Infant School, individualized teaching, and ungradedness. Mrs. Weber demurred. She suggested that such definitions before the fact might actually be dangerous to the program, might imperil the program at the point of experimentation, before it had been attempted and realized. It would be better, Mrs. Weber suggested, to forget labels, put aside preconceptions, and merely explore what actions could be taken to create an environment specifically based on the learning drives of children. Such an environment should only eliminate the traditional classroom structures that failed to advance learning. If, after that bridge had been crossed, ungradedness seemed feasible, well and good. "I questioned these definitions as being unsuitable to the kind of work I would be doing," said Mrs. Weber, "which could not be defined until it had first been investigated. The search, as a matter of fact, was for what was appropriate to do; what was possible to do." (R9,p.3)

Problems in the school

The program's beginning at PS 84 was not auspicious. The succession of teachers' strikes in the early part of 1968-69 school year affected the climate of the school and made it difficult for the

new program to develop smoothly. Long-stanging friction between the school's principal, on the one hand, and a sizeable group of parents and teachers, on the other, injected an additional political note. The school administration did not keep promises to divert gym traffic from the selected corridor, and raised objections to using CCNY student teachers in the project.

Fire regulations

Most serious was the controversy that arose over interpretation of the New York City fire law. Like PS 123, PS 84 had constant negotiations with the custodian, the district office, and the New York City Fire Department over the use of materials and equipment in the corridor. Children used the corridor, in small groups or in pairs, to investigate some question, and Mrs. Weber's concept of a section of the school as an experimental unit – classrooms united by a corridor and used as a total learning environment – was never in question. Equipment, however, was used only tentatively in the corridor.

A narrow interpretation of the fire law won out, supported by the principal shortly before she resigned. Forbidding any equipment in the corridor meant restructuring the program and shifting the emphasis from the corridor to changes in the classrooms adjacent to the corridor. Were it not for the interest of the parents, the willingness of the teachers, and the tenacity of Mrs. Weber, the program would have floundered.

The new principal permitted CCNY students to become part of the program. At this writing, authorities allow use of the tiled corridor walls for notices and allow children to use the corridor without equipment, so that the corridor continues as a channel of communication and as part of a total learning environment. Children from all corridor classes use the corridor together for morning singing sessions.

The "corridor teacher"

Despite the lack of a corridor, the school assigned a "corridor teacher" to the program in the spring of 1969.* This teacher moves among the four classes in the program and gives their teachers additional professional help, sometimes bringing with him such special equipment as a printing press. This year, a new corridor has been added, and there are seven instead of four classes now separated by a resource room used in common and manned by the extra

* Interestingly, this did not involve an increase in the overall school staff, but simply a rescheduling of the assignments of existing personnel. In the New York City school system, all classroom teachers have a daily prep period. Each school has a number of 'cluster teachers' who are nominally – though often not actually – specialists in a particular subject area and who are assigned to individual classrooms during the regular teachers' prep periods. A cluster teacher's schedule includes 20 such prep periods a week, each of which may be a different class in the school. At PS 84, one cluster teacher was assigned to cover all 20 prep periods of the four teachers in the program. In practice, this provided a fifth full-time teacher at no additional cost.

corridor teacher. Children from three classes at a time can use water, science materials, and the work bench, as well as cook, print, or do special art projects in this room. One or two pieces of equipment are sometimes used in the corridor though not left there.

2. *"Corridor" Within the Classroom*

Curriculum planning: restructuring the classrooms

From the beginning, Mrs. Weber and the teachers focused on how the program could be instituted within the classrooms. The kindergartens, already loosely structured and provided with a variety of manipulative materials, needed less attention; the first efforts were, therefore, directed to changing and enriching the structure of the two first-grade classes. The first-grade teachers, under Mrs. Weber's guidance, began by dividing their classrooms into learning centers, each area with its own materials.

At first, teachers wanted to include all possible materials in their own classrooms. Slowly, however, the teachers rid themselves of the concept of the self-contained classroom and became more receptive to the idea of sharing and intervisitation.

Creation of learning areas in the first-grade classrooms

In consultation with Mrs. Weber, the teachers and the school principal decided, however, that both first-grade classes would contain four distinct learning areas – language, mathematics, science, dramatization and art. "The first grade teachers were extremely willing to extend the environment in this way and were relaxed about breaking through the previous stereotypes of the first grade," said Mrs. Weber. The entire back of each room became a mathematics area. Here the child had free access to such materials as blocks, interlocking shapes, rulers, scales and weights, a balance beam – materials through which math concepts could be explored and reinforced in many ways. The science area was established along the window wall, so there would be enough light for animal and plant care. Again, a variety of materials was present, including such items as magnets, thermometers, prisms, plants, and animals.

A basic tenet of Open Door is that through the extended environment, language skills will be developed; in practice each child was encouraged to talk or write about his experiences at all of the learning stations. "Language, telling, writing, and reading are *all* part of the experiences," said Mrs. Weber. The area specifically devoted to language learning was set up at the front of the room. Within the language area, near the windows, a reading corner was created with tables and chairs, bookshelves and books. Next to the blackboard was a table that seated about eight, where the children wrote stories, played language games, and where reading instruction was conducted. "At the door," Mrs. Weber noted, "there is a small table and chair. On the

table there is a typewriter and a notice above the typewriter says 'Sign to Use – Type only one page.' The typewriter is in constant use and is not misused. Next to the typewriter, still adjacent to the blackboard, there is a small table with a couple of chairs for special language work, where a tape recorder can also be used. This is called the 'listening corner'." (R9,p.9-10) On the fourth wall, beside the sink, the art area – filled with clay, paint, brushes, and paper – was established.

The children relate to areas of the room rather than to the teacher alone; the teacher is concerned with small groups and sees individuals at various times. The breakthrough to this different first-grade shape happened after about ten trial ventures with two extremely willing teachers, according to Mrs. Weber. With the restructuring of the first grade underway, attempts were made to improve the organization and use of materials in the two kindergarten classes; to strengthen language and mathematical materials and to break down the division of the kindergarten day into 'play' and teacher-dominated 'instruction' periods. Teachers were urged to utilize play periods for all possible incidental language and mathematical experiences.

Control of movement in the classroom

Teachers were faced with the problem of how to use this new setting. In order to have some control over the traffic in her room, each teacher posted two boards with rows of hooks corresponding in number to her roster. On one board were hung tags with the name of each child in the class. On the other board, each hook was identified with a particular learning area in the room. In the morning a child took his name tag and hung it on a hook for the area in which he chose to work. If all of the hooks for a particular area were taken, the child knew he had to start somewhere else. A similar arrangement was devised to control interclass visits. In practice, the children moved from one area to another during the day, forgetting to move their tags. The teachers soon adjusted to this and intervened only when it was clear that too many children were in a particular area.

Noise level

The noise level was sometimes much higher than in the usual class, but it could be kept under control and did not seem to prevent children from concentrating. Interestingly, it was teachers – used to addressing the class as a whole – who had the more difficult time learning to modulate their voices. With teacher 'yelling' ended, the noise level, even with all the children's voices, was often lower than it had been in the old situations. There was also the problem of bringing noise and activity to an occasional halt for a group announcement or for the communication of some special achievement by a child or a group of children. It was suggested that teachers do this in various ways: by standing on a painted circle in the center of the room, for example, or by playing a set of chimes.

Lesson plans

Initially, teachers found it difficult to reconcile New York City's weekly lesson plan requirement with the new classroom environment. But they soon realized that planning was particularly important if the program was to be effective. The weekly planning must, in the words of Mrs. Weber, "consist of thinking through the possibilities of the environment, preparing for these possibilities, having the materials available for the child. The weekly plan should be a simple one that does not overburden the teacher or prevent her from relating to her long-range aims." A simple planning form was drawn up and accepted by the administration. Considering the possibilities of the environment and the particular levels of the children, the teacher could suggest the starting points for the week. As part of her planning, at the end of each week, the teacher assessed what had been achieved by the children and what had not been achieved that should have been achieved. She made provision for such learning experiences in the week ahead.

Individual and group projects

There were several ways in which a teacher could use the classroom environment to reflect her weekly plan. At first, teachers were concerned that they did not have enough space in their rooms to make available at one time all of the materials purchased under the program. They soon found that this was an advantage; that by changing the offerings at each learning area they could maintain the children's interest, reinforce concept learning which had already begun, and stimulate further growth. To give direction to the children's exploration of the materials, the teachers placed at each learning area a stack of cards on which they had written questions. Each child was encouraged to select a card and to work out the stated problem using the appropriate materials. Sheets containing a series of questions were also to be found at the learning areas, and it was not uncommon to see children, in the midst of the noise of activity, sitting quietly and working out the answers. The teachers also devised projects in which the whole class was involved; the walls of the rooms were filled with colorful graphs and charts made by the children, giving such information as how many brothers and sisters each child had, who lived on what floor, and how many children had birthdays in a particular month of the year. Over the year, the teachers became very adept at devising these projects. Mrs. Weber brought to their attention a number of texts and teachers' manuals which provided ideas for them, including those of the Nuffield Foundation, Science Research Associates, and the Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Achievement records

Another problem for the teachers was keeping up-to-date records on the progress of each child. In their first attempts, the teachers failed to recognize the value to each child of repeated encounters with materials. They tended to assume that a skill mastered once was a skill integrated into the child's sum of concept knowledge. In time, the teachers devised various methods of monitoring a child's progress and prepared a catalogue of skills achieved.

Work assignments, individualized instruction

If a teacher found that a child was not learning a particular skill, she assigned an appropriate task. The teacher developed several ways of doing this. One first-grade teacher, for example, would let the children move freely about the room in the morning. After lunch she brought the children together for a brief period in which they discussed the morning activities, and then, singling out those with whom she was most concerned, she asked them to place their tags on hooks for a particular learning area. During the afternoon she made a point of working with them. But, if the teacher found a child was weak in math, there were always things she could ask him to count and measure, no matter what the child was engaged in. If she wanted him to have additional language exercise, there were things to talk and write about.

Parent participation

During the year, parents were brought into the program. Many provided materials for the children and some gave their time. They helped care for the animals and window planters and contributed their knowledge of such crafts as knitting and sewing. Spanish-speaking parents worked with children with English-language handicaps. (None of the teachers spoke Spanish.) The schools, as part of the Balanced Class Project program, provided regular periods of Spanish teaching.

Interclass visits

Children visited often among the different classes, and among the different grades. Each classroom had its special attractions – the stove in one, animals in another, the printing press in a third. Kindergarten children visited the first grades to use the many science and mathematics materials; first-grade pupils went to the kindergartens to use the housekeeping materials and the assortment of building blocks. The materials moved between classrooms too – on a special wagon manned by the corridor teacher. As the program progressed the children learned from one another; learned to exploit the wealth of the classrooms without constant appeals to the teacher.

Although the loss of the corridor was a major setback, "The project could still be defined as a *community* of classrooms adjacent to each other and joined by the corridor in which children could feel a unity", said Mrs. Weber. "It was a community where children of different ages and teachers each had an effect on the other. Even without the corridor, the community of classes could be established, with the corridor teacher bringing corridor richness into classrooms." (R11,p.2)

IV. MATERIALS

Selection of materials

Although it emphasizes the value of a rich environment, Open Door does not depend on a specific inventory of materials. In fact, it is much less an enrichment program than an attempt to change educational methodology and classroom structure. As such, the program can make use of any materials that advance learning. Indeed, perhaps the most important single item in the program is the standard notebook; the child is encouraged continually to record events and experiences.

Nevertheless, selection of materials was important. In setting up the program, Mrs. Weber and the teachers considered previous lacks and spent many hours over catalogues, selecting items which would contribute to a stimulating environment. They looked especially for materials designed for 'finding out', such as typewriters, a workbench, and a printing press. A partial list of materials selected for the corridor as PS 123 is given below. Manufacturers' or distributors' initials have been given after most of the items listed, and a key to these initials will be found at the end of the list.

ESS, SEE, and Responsive Environment materials figured most prominently in all lists made after this first one.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Wooden Letters (CP)
Pattern Printing Paper (REC)
16" Write-on Globe (RHS)
Plastic Letters (SPB)
Kinesthetic Letters (SPB)
Cassette Tape Recorder
Language Lotto

SCIENCE

3-Color Flashlight (CEC)
3" Magnifying Glass (CEC)
Ceramic Magnets (CEC)
6" Prism (CEC)
4" Bar Magnets (CEC)
Seeds
Earthworms
Walkingstick
Moss
Liverwort
Lichen
Leaf Mold
Lens Comparer (CP)
Jumbo Hourglass (CP)
Wood Kaleidoscope (CP)
Tuning Fork (CP)
Magic Reflector (CP)
Thermometer for Grades 2-5 (CP)
Plastic Measuring Bottles (REC)
Kitchen Physics Kit (SEE)
Surface Tension Plates (SEE)
Gerbils in Cage
Turtles, Tadpoles, Guinea Pigs
Water Table (REC)
Sand Table (NET)
ESS Books (MGH)

MATHEMATICS

QRC Curves (CP)
Big 1, Little 1 (CP)
Numbers (CP)
Space Blocks (RHS)
Perception Games (RHS)
Number-relation Blocks (RHS)
10 Numeral Blocks (CEC)
ABC of Solids (CEC)
4" Construction Cubes (CEC)
Clear View Plastic Measures (CEC)
Timelearner (CEC)
Square Fraction Inset Board (CE)
Fraction Inlay Board (CEC)
Building Geometrix (CEC)
Rick Rack Blocks (CEC)
Hexupon (EC)
Design with Tiles (CEC)
Giant Grooved Domino Blocks (LC)
Trundle Wheel (LC)
Kinesthetic Numerals (SPB)
Unifix Cubes (SPB)
Unifix Plastic Number Indicators (SPB)
Scales with Weights (SEE)
Change-maker (NET)
Cash Register

MUSIC & ART

Resonator Pipes
Musical Tone Tubes
Steel Drums
Mural Roll (CEC)
Paint Tote (CEC)
Drying Rack (CEC)
Tempera Blocks (CEC)
Mr. Sketch (CEC)

OTHER

Oven
Soft Stuffed Dolls (RHS)
Workbench and Tools
Polaroid Camera
Community Helpers (SPB)
Negro Family Set (SPB)
Metal Weaving Loom (NET)
Conductor Punch (NET)
Airplane Set (NET)
Cars & Trucks (NET)

MANUFACTURERS AND DISTRIBUTORS

CEC	Childcraft Equipment Company, New York City
CP	Creative Playthings, Princeton, New Jersey
LC	Learning Center, Princeton, New Jersey
MGM	McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York City
NET	Novo Educational Toy & Equipment Company, New York City
REC	Responsive Environment Corporation, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey
RHS	R. H. Stone Products, Detroit, Michigan
SEE	Selected Educational Equipment, Newton, Massachusetts
SPB	St. Paul Book and Stationery Company, St. Paul, Minnesota

V. EVALUATION

Evaluation of PS 123

In February 1969, the Program Reference Service of the Center for Urban Education visited the program a number of times to collect information for this report. Much of what has been presented here comes from observations and data compiled at that time.

In May 1969, to fulfill a stipulation of the New York State urban education grant, District 6 asked the Program Reference Service to conduct an *official* evaluation of the program in PS 123. PRS realized that in evaluating a developing model, a tightly structured statistical approach would be inappropriate. It chose instead to engage the services of several prominent educators, and to ask them to observe, record, and comment upon the program. Selected were Dr. Sol Gordon, a member of the Center's Board of Trustees and past director of Project Beacon, Yeshiva University's urban teacher training program; Dr. Millie Almy of the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute, Teachers College, one of the nation's foremost authorities on early childhood education; Dr. George Blair, past director of Urban Education Programs, N.Y. State Department of Education; and Dr. Alice Padawer-Singer, a colleague of Dr. Blair, and a research scientist in education and the social sciences.

Only the statements of Drs. Gordon and Almy will be given here. The short time available for evaluation research limited data collected by the other evaluators and only tentative conclusions could be reached.*

A. Dr. Gordon's Statement

Dr. Gordon's statement

" . . . What I observed each day was 20 children working or playing in the corridor – the doors of three or four of five classrooms open, and the teacher conducting small group lessons amidst some apparent confusion and a relatively high noise level. I visited PS 123 five times for 18 hours of observation and PS 84 twice for three hours. In addition, I spent several hours talking with Mrs. Weber.

1 *The Corridor*

The corridor

"The learning process was casual, random, and spontaneous. There was very little of what might be called aimless, restless, or disruptive behavior. Children of varying ages were enjoying the corridor together. Children seemed happy to be at school – a phenomenon not often observed in a ghetto school. By making use of space ordinarily available in a school, children were afforded extended opportunities for creative individualized instruction, though this is not to say that instruction was necessarily planned or purposive. Instead of increasing problems of discipline, the corridor seemed to have the opposite effect. During a significant part of the day, class size was reduced, restless or behavior problem children could engage in activities that were satisfying to them, and the bright and/or bored child could escape routine class instruction.

"Does an approach which emphasizes spontaneous learning in a setting of many self-selecting alternatives *educate* children? Crudely speaking, by 'educate' in this instance I mean teach them to read, write, and do arithmetic at functional elementary school levels. By the time children reach the fourth or fifth grade, will they function academically at the level according to the city-wide tests? It is the crucial question, because, in the climate of our times (militant community preoccupation with decentralization and control of public school education), no educational program will survive – no matter how exciting or innovative its ego-enhancing, humanizing aspects – unless it also provides a basic education.

* Respondents (three teachers, three aides, and three student-teachers) to questionnaires prepared by the investigators and distributed to all staff reacted positively to the program, both in terms of their own roles and in terms of its effects on the children's behavior. Of 21 respondents to a questionnaire sent to all parents, 20 indicated "a belief that the project helped the children to learn," and all wanted it continued the following year.

"The structured, homogeneously grouped self-contained classroom, however, has been notoriously ineffective in providing a basic education to the children of the ghetto, and perhaps to children outside the ghetto as well. Thus, it is not hard to accept the rationale for Mrs. Weber's ghetto-based program, which could serve as a model for a sound educational process for all children.

"Involvement of the children varied greatly depending on who was working with them. For example, at different times at the water table, where different sized containers provide ways to measure and compare, children seemed: (1) to be simply playing around when alone or in a group by themselves: (2) to be getting confused by one education assistant, who was argumentative and who did not know how to get a point across, although he knew the purpose of the water station; (3) to be learning the concept, but becoming bored after a few minutes with an able but passive and unimaginative educational assistant; and (4) to be learning (cognitively involved) and excited and fascinated for more than 15 minutes with an animated, inventive student teacher.

"There were, of course, other effective interactions between the children and the project staff. Virtually all the children responded enthusiastically to Mrs. Weber, a superb, experienced teacher who, when present, was teaching all the time, and to the inexperienced, first-year corridor teacher who was well taught by Mrs. Weber. But on some days the negative examples cited above were typical of corridor operations. I also had the feeling that there were too many objects and blocks that were easily employed for unproductive purposes – although all materials clearly had been carefully chosen to further the children's conceptual development. I must indicate that I was informed by several educators (whose judgment I trust) that before 'end-termitis' set in, the corridor was much closer to the expectations of the director than anything I was able to observe myself. However, an extended (two-week) workshop on educational philosophy and process prior to the opening of a new school for all personnel involved in this and newly developing Open Door corridor programs would seem highly desirable.

2. *The Open Door Classroom*

The classroom

"What I looked for first was whether children moving from the corridor could readily settle down to a formal lesson.

"I talked with and observed the five teachers of the program, enough to note that their different

personalities were the most important factor in determining the prevailing classroom climate. All teachers, however, reported that the transition from the corridor to the classroom was smooth and presented no special problems. Most went so far as to say that the period of corridor freedom facilitated 'formal' learning. Perhaps four of the five teachers were originally unimpressed with the program, but a year later, all acknowledged favoring it and learning from it (especially the corridor operation and the weekly staff meetings).

"If she wanted privacy, the teacher simply closed the door. There was some interclass visitation, but all agreed that this was a relatively underdeveloped aspect of the program. The classrooms themselves contained more equipment and facilities than did the average classroom. Project funds enabled even the first and second grade classes to include resources (live animals, science units, printing and art units) such as one would ordinarily find in an enriched kindergarten. I was impressed that all teachers were concerned about and actively taught reading (or reading readiness) and were aware of achievement levels of all their pupils. In the informally organized class I observed the following reading lesson: A class of 25 students was divided into several groups, eight students working with the teacher around a table; all were apparently at second-grade level of instruction. The book itself seemed to bore the children, but they were more or less attentive, and they all could read. Two were with a student teacher. They were behind and getting extra help. Two were reading to each other. Three were fooling around, and three were absent. The noise level seemed very high to me, but I seemed to be the only one bothered by it. The general reading ability seemed much higher than ordinarily found in second grade in ghetto schools.

"Another time, on what the teacher called 'a bad day', small group activities and self-directed arithmetic lessons seemed, for most of the children, 'fooling around' or playing. When I reviewed their arithmetic (by personal inspection), I found that most had not learned the lesson that the teacher thought they had.

"I am including the above observations even at the risk of being misunderstood. While I found this class uncongenial to me because of the disorder and the physical fooling around (and I dare say that parents, if they dropped in, might be taken aback) in general according to such standards as verbalization and reading levels, this class was achieving much better than I would have thought possible. No doubt the attention given to counting, measuring, and numeric comparison helped to develop the children's mathematical skills – even if this was not evident on the above-mentioned day.

"The other classes were conducted in what might be called a competent conventional manner. If a child was bored or unmotivated, he just turned himself off in a way not directly antagonistic to the teacher. In general, I did not see children who were unhappy, really 'uptight', or hostile. I am told there were a few, but they were not obvious to me. The teachers reported, and the school guidance counselor confirmed, that there had been a noticeable decline in discipline problems since the program had begun. With discipline invariably seen by teachers as the number one problem of ghetto schools (not only in New York but in every large city in the United States), we must consider this observation important.

"The teachers did not have to change their ordinary classroom practices and used only curriculum material that they felt comfortable with. They were, however, encouraged to attend staff meetings and to permit children to visit the corridor and experiment with the Open Door. This flexibility would make it possible to introduce an Open Door program on a small scale into almost any school. It is, of course, expected that teachers would be influenced by the corridor activities. A few teacher volunteers would be easy to come by. The big problem would be to get principals and administrators to agree to the use of the corridor and allow kindergarten, first, and second-grade classes to be next to each other.

"The beauty of the program is that each school trying it could develop its own character and modifications. This is a conscious policy of the director.

3. *Teacher Training (Preservice)*

Teacher Training

"I spoke to the six students, who were all enthusiastic about the program and Mrs. Weber, their supervisor. Having observed many teacher training programs, I can vouch that students are very seldom satisfied with their training. I feel that this City College program could easily become a model for training teachers in early childhood education. The focus is on working individually and in small groups with the children, watching a master teacher supervising sessions, as well as participating in all aspects of the program. For this part of the program alone, it would be worthwhile to continue the project. There is a crucial need to train teachers in individualized instruction.

4. *A related Program in PS 84*

PS 84

"I visited this program twice and spoke with only one teacher but at some length. In operation

since September 1968, it promises to be another exciting model for testing some of Mrs. Weber's ideas about individualizing instruction and training teachers. I could not help but be impressed with the first-grade teacher's enthusiasm and sense of mission in what she felt was the most stimulating idea in the educational world today. I sensed, too, that the teachers in that school were closer, shared more than the teachers did in PS 123, and were able to break down the traditional barriers of the self-contained classroom with deliberate speed.

5. *Conclusions*

Dr. Gordon's conclusions

"The director was open about complications and things to be done. She was eminently conscious of process. It takes time to get ideas across. With administrators, she was the epitome of the soft sell. There were no exaggerated claims – no effort to establish a cult. In fact, she was most concerned that premature publicity and the constant stream of visitors could project the program onto the national scene without its having had the opportunity to test its effectiveness. She was especially careful to point out that her program was not an effort to transport the English Infant School into the United States, but rather an opportunity for the people working here to create their own model, however much they might be influenced by some of the English principles. She knew that many technicalities must be worked through. For example, how can the educational assistants be included as part of the staff training program? (Who will be with the children when the staff is meeting?) How can an orientation project be organized for cluster (relief) teachers in harmony with the program? Parent involvement has been limited, although it is considered important. Fire regulations did not permit permanent stations in the corridor. Therefore, the corridor had to be set up and packed away each day – a tedious, time-consuming process. Ideally, new schools could be built with wide enough corridors and/or old schools could add built-in furniture. (This proposal has already moved from Mrs. Weber's fertile mind to a drawing board.)

"The Open Door program, inspired and pioneered by Mrs. Lillian Weber, is for me one of the most impressive educational experiences that I have had the opportunity to evaluate. In my recent role as Director of Project Beacon at Yeshiva University, I have observed, participated in, read about, and evaluated literally hundreds of programs for disadvantaged pupils in urban centers. This program in my judgment carries with it the greatest promise, because it can be introduced into a school which may not, as a whole, be ready for it. It offers, at the same time, an opportunity to test individualized instruction and informal teaching without requiring additional classroom space; it provides a much needed model for preservice and inservice teacher training; it facilitates the introduction of nongraded heterogeneous classes at levels

which can be examined by the entire school, and finally, and perhaps most important, it gives another dimension to early childhood education by insisting that education for the disadvantaged must be 'good' education by any standards; the educational principles involved must be as pertinent for children living in a ghetto as they would be for children in suburbs." (R8,p.3-8)

B. Dr. Almy's Statement

Dr. Almy's statement (PS 123)

". . . . To a person who has had experience in many kinds of classrooms, the quick message from this program is clear. The children are having a vital and, I think, educative experience. I saw numerous instances of prolonged attention to number games, for example, of curiosity (in using the balances, in observing animals, in trying a new game), and of learning (to count, to use new words). I also saw children helping one another in a most constructive fashion.

"The corridor teacher, particularly, capitalized on and extended the children's use of language in every possible way. Much that the children did was recorded in stories and charts dictated to the teacher. The number experiences (which were also rich in language possibilities) were many, varied, and obviously absorbing. The children moved about rather freely but appeared to be in good control of themselves as indicated by the fact that two or three groups of youngsters, left for a short period in a classroom by themselves, continued with their activities as though the teacher were still present. . . .

"This approach to education is not an easy one; for full effectiveness teachers must be deeply involved and constantly alert to the children's behavior. From what I know of Mrs. Weber's work, her support, both emotional and technical, to the teachers is critically important. I suspect, however, that given sufficient support while they are learning the new approach, and with sufficient equipment and materials available, teachers will continue on their own, and will also influence other teachers.

"I think the program is working effectively, and I think it should, by all means, be continued. Such continuation should, of course, include ample provision for working with the teachers, for supplies and materials, and for continuing appraisal of the children's learning." (R8,p.9)

Evaluation of PS 84

No formal evaluation of the program in PS 84 has been undertaken, and none is planned. Yet many parents, teachers, and school administrators in the district believe the program is working. For the current school year (1960-70), the district has expanded Open Door at PS 84 and installed it in three other elementary schools. In each of these schools parent and teacher

demand caused the program to be enlarged beyond the district's original plans. At PS 84, for example, there are now ten classes officially in the program and approximately ten more whose teachers are working together informally to establish an 'Open Door' environment; at least one class at each grade level in the school is involved.

VI. BUDGET

From its beginning in early 1968 until February 1969, the program in PS 123 received virtually no public financial support. Two private grants totaling $3,000 were obtained through Mrs. Weber's efforts and used for the purchase of corridor materials. Mrs. Weber's time was contributed by City College. Whenever possible PS 123 made available its permanent substitute teacher to direct corridor sessions at which Mrs. Weber was not present.

The first public grant – $17,528 in New York State urban education funds – covered the period February through June 1969. Additional monies were granted for the 1969-70 school year. The budget for both periods is listed on the next page. In the "Amount" column, under Period 1, the allocated funds are listed; under Period 2, are the suggested figures. Actual funds appropriated were not available at press time.

Item	Amount		Comment
	Period 1 2/69 - 6/69	*Period 2* 9/69 - 6/70	
Personnel			
Consultant	$ 450	$ 2,333	Not accounted for in the first period is release time donated by CCNY and the many hours of her own time contributed by Mrs. Weber. The sum in period 2 constitutes reimbursement to CCNY.
Corridor Teacher		6,900	During spring 1969 one of the school's cluster (relief) teaching positions was used for this purpose.
Educational Assistants (6)	8,748		Two of these aides were assigned to the corridor. The rest worked in the classrooms.
Corridor Aides (2)		5,130	30 hours per week. In period 2, classroom aides are being paid out of the regular school budget and the number of these has been cut in PS 123 as in many schools.
School Secretary	214	5,200	40 hours in period 1; full-time in period 2.
School Clerk	114		40 hours.

Budget: PS 123

Item	Amount		Comment
	Period 1 *2/69 - 6/69*	*Period 2* *9/69 - 6/70*	
Personnel			
Teacher Trainees (6)	$ 720		Student teachers: $6 per corridor session x 20 sessions.
Social Security (4.8%)	437		This item was not included in the preliminary budget for period 2.
Equipment	150	$ 4,375.45	Period 1: 1 typewriter. Period 2: 10 typewriters, 2 line-o-scribe machines, 30 utility cabinets, 10 filing cabinets, 1 oven, 10 tape recorders and auxiliary equipment, 12 cameras with film supply.
Supplies & Materials	1,500	3,500	Period 1: additional manipulative materials. Period 2: replenishment of materials for first corridor and full supply for new corridor.
Bus Transportation	945		The district inserted both of these items into the first request for bookkeeping pur-
Kindergarten Lunches	1,875		poses. Neither was germane to the program, and the money for the busing was returned.

Item	Amount		Comment
	Period 1 2/69 - 6/69	*Period 2* 9/69 - 6/70	
Personnel			
Miscellaneous	$ 540	$ 900	Period 1: "special foods." Period 2: petty cash to be used at the discretion of the teachers; $10/month for each teacher.
Evaluation	1,000	3,000	
Teacher Training		2,400	This sum represents tuition for a course given at CCNY for all teachers and aides in the program.
	$16,693	$33,738.45	
5% of Combined Total	835		This item was not included in the budget for period 2.
Total	$17,528	$33,738.45	

Budget: PS 84

Administratively a part of the district's Balanced Class Project, the program in P.S. 84 has no budget of its own. The district has estimated that $5,000 in BCP funds were expended on the program during the 1968-69 school year – $2,850 in consultant fees, the rest for materials used in the four classrooms. No additional aides were hired; as noted on page 29, rescheduling of teacher prep periods enabled a cluster teacher already in the school to take on the assignment of corridor teacher.

In the 1969-70 school year, with three additional schools adopting Open Door, BCP has committed $20,000 to the program. This sum has been allocated in the following ways:

Item	Amount	Comment
Consultant	$4,500	$150/week x 30 weeks.
Assistant to the Consultant	1,500	$75/week x 20 weeks.
Corridor Aides (5)	10,000	Two in P.S. 84; one in each of the other schools.
Materials	4,000	Approximately $1,000/school. $3,000 from ESEA Title I "optional aid" and $1,000 from the district's Title I funds.

VII. REFERENCES

A. Published Literature

1. Tobier, A. J. "The open classroom; humanizing the coldness of public places." *The Center Forum*. v 3, May 15, 1969. p. 19-23.

This article, quoting Mrs. Weber extensively, outlines the development of the program in both PS 123 and PS 84.

B. Proposals (PS 123)

Mrs. Weber's proposals

2. New York, City College, School of Education. *The Open Door project*. New York, City University, 1967 (Proposal.)

Submitted in the fall of 1967 to the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity, the proposal presents a plan for the corridor model in PS 123. Request was denied.

3. New York City Board of Education, Office of State and Federally Assisted Programs. *Open Door project for continuity of experience*. New York, 1968. (Urban education program application.)

Similar to R2, this proposal requesting $40,819 for the 1968-69 school year was submitted to the New York State Education Department, Office of Urban Education. No action was taken.

4. _____.
Open Door project for continuity of experience. New York, 1969. (Urban education program application.)

A revision of R3 covering the period February through June 1969, this proposal was accepted by the state. $17,528 in Urban Education funds were provided.

5. _____.
Open Door project for continuity of experience. New York, 1969. (Urban education program application.)

A request for $33,738 for the 1969-70 school year, this proposal specifies extension of the program to a second corridor as well as maintenance of the first. Request was granted.

Progress reports: PS 123

C. Progress Reports and Evaluations (PS 123)

6. Weber, Lillian. *Comments from teachers on all the small things that contributed to the function or disfunction of the corridor, and whether they feel that insofar as it functioned, it was a success.* New York, 1968. (Rexograph.)

   In large part a transcription of a meeting between teachers and the consultant, the document presents a picture of corridor operations during the first months of the program.

7. _____. *Report on PS 123,* May 11. New York, 1960. (Rexograph.)

   This progress report discusses the operation of the corridor during the 1968-69 school year.

8. The Center for Urban Education, Program Reference Service. *An evaluation of the Open Door program in PS 123M.* New York, The Center, 1969.

   As previously noted, the evaluation contains the observations and comments of Sol Gordon and Millie Almy, as well as an analysis of parent and staff reactions to the program prepared by George Blair and Alice Padawer-Singer.

D. Progress Reports (PS 84)

Progress reports: PS 84

9. Weber, Lillian. *Report on the planning in PS 84.* New York, 1969. (Rexograph.)

   This report, written during the Christmas 1968 holidays and submitted to the district superintendent and the principal of PS 84, provides a record of the early stages of the program in PS 84, with particular emphasis on the organization of the classrooms.

10. _____. *PS 84, February 12.* New York, 1969. (Rexograph.)

    This report focuses on a number of problems that arose in the first months of the program; these included use of the corridor, placement of student teachers, selection of aides, and scheduling of teacher prep periods.

11. _____. *Report on developments since February 18th.* (Title supplied) New York, 1969. (Rexograph.)

    This report discusses the further development of the program within the classrooms, after it became clear that equipment and materials could not be placed in the corridor.

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A full description and discussion of informal education theory and practice in England is presented in the forthcoming volume, THE ENGLISH INFANT SCHOOL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION by Lillian Weber, to be published by Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, September 1971.

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